

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen for the privilege that democratic government provides, to be allowed to speak to you today as the State Government struggles to create a workable budget.

I am the father of three challenged men. Two of them are supported by state funding through the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) network of to private non-profit and community social service providers and organizations.

Robert, who is here with me today, is forty years old; vision impaired, and also has other challenges. Since he lost his sight when he was five years old in 1975, he has been in residence and has received educational, occupational and other services at the Connecticut Institute for the Blind, commonly known as Oak Hill. He currently receives vocational services from HARC located here in Hartford.

Eric, Robert's older brother, who is forty four, is autistic. He is a client of the Kennedy Center in Bridgeport and also is supported through DDS's Self Determination Program

I come to speak about the funding of the programs which the state provides for them Abraham Lincoln once said "To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men." I agree with Mr. Lincoln and therefore will not be held silent when I sense that the programs that are provided for both of these young men are threatened by the fiscal difficulties which we as individuals, our state, towns, and country find ourselves in.. Without these programs to support them these people become forgotten members of society. This situation would also negate the investment which has been made in these people over time. As a parent and advocate, I cannot allow this to happen without making my feelings known.

I believe that enhancing and growing the role of private providers, being utilized by my sons and others like them, makes more sense. It would be more feasible more productive and more economical. I'm sure you are aware that funding for these private providers has remained the same over the last three or four years. This has resulted in less real income for these people due to inflation.. I am aware that this situation is not unique, and by the way, I want to thank the governor for holding the line on the line item for these services, but I can foresee serious damage being done to programs such as these if, within a reasonable time frame, positive adjustments are not made.

To forsake these people at this time would leave a permanent black mark on this society and the government which according to the preamble of the United States Constitution is supposed to "promote the general welfare"

Reducing the scope of these programs would not lend itself to promoting the general welfare of our society.

Carl Noll